

that, along with the Senator from Kentucky, Senator MCCONNELL, and others. It is still our hope maybe we can resolve that today if possible.

I guess the point I want to make is, there is a 3:15 p.m. meeting at the White House with budget negotiators. I will certainly update the Senate as to the progress following that meeting. What we have agreed to do after each meeting is issue a joint statement so it will not upset anybody and somehow get it off track.

It is my view that the American people want us to reach an agreement on a balanced budget regardless of party, and I am talking about people outside the Capitol, people out in the real world, like some would say. I have had an opportunity to meet with some of those people in North Carolina and Iowa in the past week. I think they want us to do this for the right reason, not that it is a game, or not that it is Republicans versus Democrats, but that it would, if we could get a balanced budget agreement, if the President was on board and it did pass the Congress, then we believe, based on experts, that interest rates would drop 2 percent, for example. That is 2 percent on a college loan, 2 percent on a car loan, 2 percent on a farm loan or home loan, and that would be in the interest of all Americans, certainly regardless of party or regardless of philosophy.

So that is why I think there is a good-faith effort on the part of the President and on the part of the leadership, Republican and Democratic leadership in the House and Senate, and we will proceed this afternoon at 3:15. We are prepared to stay through the weekend, if necessary. Sooner or later we have to reach out and make some of the tough decisions on Medicare and taxes, but, in my view, if we are serious about this, we can do it, or if we cannot reach an agreement, we ought to disagree and Congress can do what Congress feels must be done and the President can do what the President thinks must be done.

Having said that, I will also advise my colleagues hopefully in the next couple of hours what I anticipate the program to be for next week. We do start a new session of Congress on Wednesday of next week. I guess we have been in like this before a couple of times.

I am advised we would come in at 11:55 next Wednesday, adjourn sine die, and then at noon, 5 minutes later, start the new session. But I will give all the other details. I am not certain how many of my colleagues will be present at that time.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 1643

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, based on what I said earlier, I now ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1643 regarding MFN status for Bulgaria, and that the Sen-

ate now proceed to its immediate consideration; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of H.R. 2099, HUD-VA, H.R. 1977, Interior, and H.R. 2076, State, Justice, Commerce, as vetoed by the President, be inserted, the bill be advanced to third reading and passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, all without any further action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I ask that the unanimous-consent request be modified to provide for a substitute amendment which would reopen the Government and keep it open until January 30. Absent such a modification, I object.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object. I will just state to my friend from Vermont that we both share the same feeling about returning employees to work. But if we can, as I indicated earlier, get these bills down to the President, agree with the President any problems he has with these bills will be resolved in the budget agreement, then these employees will be back to work until the end of the fiscal year. So it would be permanent, it would not be a 30-day continuing resolution. That would leave, as I said, the District of Columbia, which is now under a continuing resolution, and Labor-HHS, if I can convince my colleagues to let us bring that up, and then foreign ops where there is only one difference holding up that very important piece of legislation. I would be constrained to object on that basis.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the majority leader's original unanimous-consent request?

Mr. LEAHY. Reserving the right to object further. I will note that I share the distinguished majority leader's—one of the finest majority leaders this Senate has had—desire to go back, but I cannot agree to a unanimous-consent to, in effect, override vetoes of the President by unanimous consent. So I do object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I had not thought of that, but I think that probably would be something to think about. These are separate bills, not the ones vetoed by the President. It would be new bills. They would be identical to the ones he vetoed. But the one additional ingredient here is that we are on these budget negotiations, and we are serious about it—the President is, I am, the Speaker is, Senator DASCHLE and Congressman GEPHARDT are.

I know on the Interior bill, for example, there are only about three reasons the President said he vetoed that bill. Those are all the parts and all the things we are hearing about on the nightly news. We ought to be able to resolve that. Maybe we can come back later and try, instead of these three at once, maybe sending down one we might be able to work out. We would

do this only with the agreement of the President. So we are not trying to do anything here that the President would not sign off on, and I intend to raise that at our 3:15 meeting and tell him in good faith that if he would let us send down these one or two bills, we are prepared to resolve differences as part of the budget agreement.

I thank my colleague from Vermont. Maybe we can revisit this in a different form later today.

Mr. LEAHY. If the distinguished majority leader would yield, Mr. President, I share his concern and desire to put the Government back to work. This is not a thing that is helping anybody. They should be back. I wish him well in his meetings with the President. I have felt, if I might state frankly, that if the issue to be resolved in this budget impasse was left to this Chamber, Republicans and Democrats could come together with the President. It would mean that we would not have a Clinton budget, a Dole budget, a Leahy budget, but we might have the best of all of them and we would have a balanced budget.

I have been in negotiations and conference committees with the distinguished majority leader on everything from agriculture to foreign policy to finance and tax matters. I know that while he is a strong and tough bargainer, I know he also wants the Government to operate. I believe there is the possibility to do this and I hope we might.

ORDER FOR RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I will make one more unanimous-consent request.

I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senators LEAHY, DORGAN, and NICKLES—unless there are others wishing to speak—the Senate would stand in recess subject to the call of the chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wonder if I might make a comment. I understand the purpose of both objections. The majority leader, I know, recognizes that the passage of a clean CR would mean that everyone would go back to work immediately. It is true that it would be only as long as the CR lasted, but it would end the shutdown.

I understand the circumstances which required the Senator from Kansas to object to that at this point. I wish them well in the discussions with the President this afternoon. In the event this were to go on for several more days, can the majority leader foresee circumstances under which a clean CR might be accomplished so that all Federal workers might go back to work immediately?

Mr. DOLE. Well, I am not certain there will be a CR, but something has